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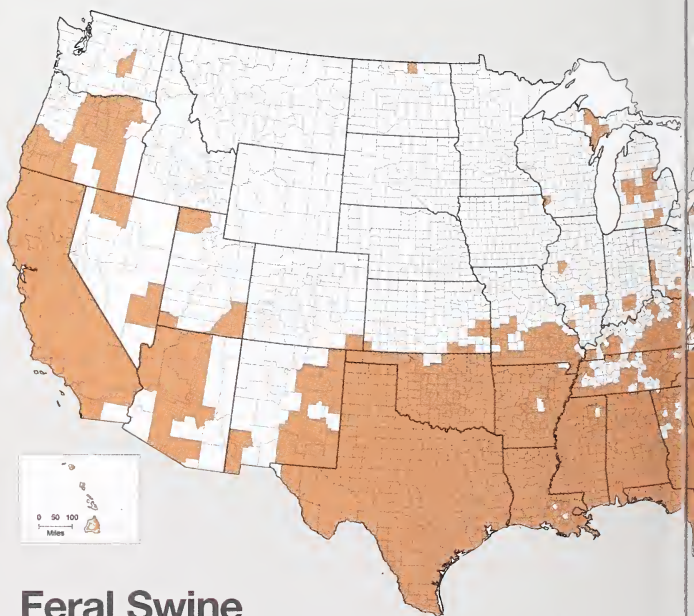
FERAL SWINE:

Impacts to Native Wildlife

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

What Are Feral Swine and Where Are They Found?

Feral swine were first introduced to the United States by Spanish explorers in the 1500s. Since then, natural breeding, new introductions, and relocation by humans have caused populations to rapidly expand. Feral swine can thrive in almost any habitat, mature at 6 to 8 months of age, and a single sow can have up to 2 litters of 4 to 12 piglets a year, making them a prime example of an invasive species. Growing feral swine populations are encroaching on many important wildlife habitats, causing significant damages to these ecosystems. Feral swine also damage the quality of lands for ranching, recreation, and other uses. Feral swine populations impact important habitats and ecosystems, which further jeopardizes threatened, endangered, and already vulnerable species. Feral swine also live in habitats of importance to deer, turkeys, upland birds, and other valuable game species; they pose economic risks to businesses that depend on these game species to succeed.



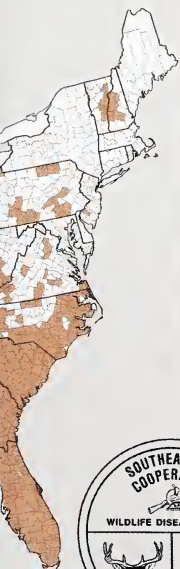
**Feral Swine
Populations by County, 2015**

How Do Feral Swine Impact Native Wildlife and Plants?

Feral swine are one of the world's worst invasive species. It has been estimated that feral swine have played a role in the decline of nearly 300 native plants and animals in the United States alone. Over 250 of these species are threatened or endangered, while others are valuable game animals or important native forage plants. Feral swine impact native species and



ecosystems in a variety of ways—from direct predation or competition to altering ecosystems and destroying habitats through their destructive foraging, trampling, and wallowing behaviors.



The feral swine distribution map was prepared from data independently compiled by State, Federal, and Territorial fish and wildlife management agencies, agriculture agencies, and universities of the United States in cooperation with the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia. Support for this project was through Cooperative Agreement Number 15-9100-1407, Veterinary Services, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

DIRECT IMPACTS

Feral swine are opportunistic omnivores that prey on the nests, eggs, and young of native wildlife such as sea turtles, prairie chickens, wild turkeys, alligators, and upland game birds. They also prey on both the young and adults of small vertebrate species such as rodents, amphibians, and reptiles like the endangered dunes sagebrush lizard. They root out and eat amphibians and invertebrates from ground cover, threatening species such as the flatwoods salamander. They tear up grasses, shrubs, and seedlings, killing sensitive plants such as Mead's milkweed. Feral swine compete with native wildlife for many key resources. Their keen sense of smell, tenacious feeding behaviors, and ability to digest a variety of foods makes them serious competitors for nutritional resources. They consume the fruits, nuts, and seeds of trees, thereby competing with deer, turkeys, black bears, and small mammals such as squirrels. Feral swine are aggressive animals and will actively chase off other species. Their generally disruptive behavior, particularly around feeding or wallowing areas, will disturb and scatter other animals. For example, the endangered Houston toad will avoid breeding in ponds the feral swine use for wallowing.

INDIRECT IMPACTS

Feral swine are ecosystem engineers, which means they can change their environment by impacting the vegetation and soils throughout their range, changing plant distribution in



Feral swine preying on ground-nesting bird eggs

grasslands and forests, and destroying habitats for rare species such as Hine's emerald dragonfly. Consuming nuts and seeds, along with rooting and rubbing behaviors, can impact forest growth, particularly in oak forests. Feral swine aid in spreading invasive plant species, such as strawberry guava, by disturbing the native plants and transporting invasive weed seeds. They alter runoff and water quality in wetland environments, through rooting and wallowing, which impacts fish species such as the Oskaloosa darter. Feral swine carry over 30 pathogens and 40 parasites, many of which can infect wildlife.

FAR-REACHING IMPACTS

Feral swine eat mostly vegetation, but recent research shows they will prey on native wildlife as well. Feral swine have been known to consume the eggs of ground-nesting birds, reptiles, or amphibians; the young of large mammals such as deer; and both the young and adults of small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.



Feral swine rooting protected sea turtle nest to eat eggs

Habitat change, through their wallowing, rooting, and feeding, is the most widespread and harmful impact of feral swine to native wildlife. Feral swine alter wetland and riparian habitats, pollute water, change vegetation composition and distribution, and displace native wildlife across the United States.

What Is Being Done?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has coordinated and begun a national effort to manage the extensive damage caused by expanding invasive feral swine populations by working closely with partners at the Federal, State, and local levels.



What Can I Do?

Feral swine cause problems by damaging native ecosystems, preying on or competing with native wildlife, and spreading diseases.

- If you live in a State with no or low populations of feral swine, report any sightings, sign, or damage to the wildlife or agriculture officials in your State.
- Do not relocate feral swine to new areas or transport them to other States.
- Share the knowledge, spread the word, and discourage the transportation and spread of feral swine.





Want To Learn More?

Call the APHIS Wildlife Services program in your State at **1-866-4-USDA-WS** or go to **www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/stopferalswine** to learn more about the problems caused by this invasive animal, as well as to seek advice and assistance in dealing with feral swine.



**Manage the Damage
Stop Feral Swine**

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